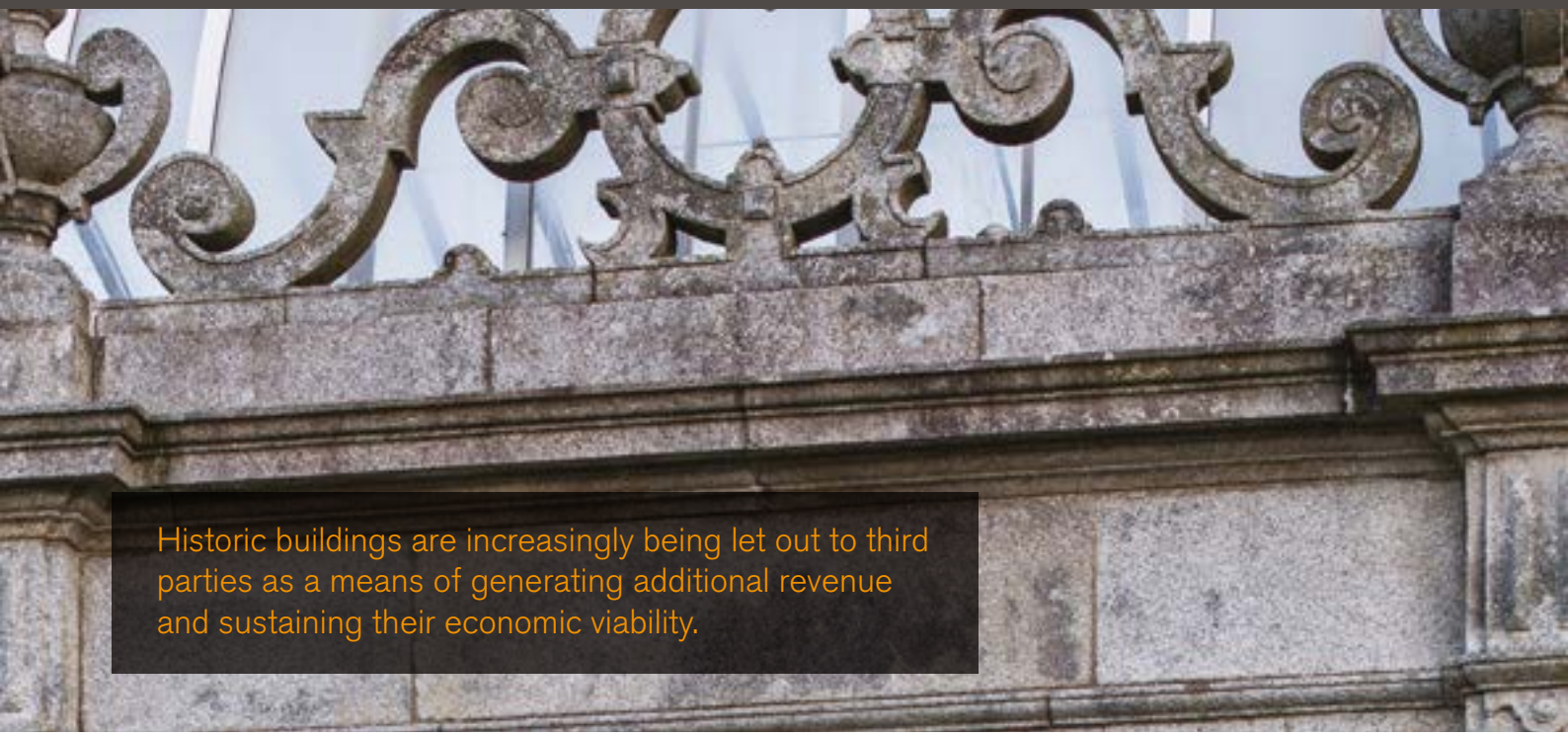
Hiring and letting of heritage buildings



Historic buildings are increasingly being let out to third parties as a means of generating additional revenue and sustaining their economic viability.

The use of such buildings for third party events introduces the potential for significant property damage and liability risks to the property owner, which will require careful control and management if they are to be successfully managed.

Risk assessment

A general risk assessment should be carried out for all hiring and letting events under consideration, taking into account such factors as the nature of the event being proposed, the nature of the participants, the locations in which the events are to take place and the event's potential to cause property damage. Event access routes for hirers, their contractors and guests via other parts of the property, and the level of supervision required for events should not be overlooked. Acceptable types of event, their frequency and attendance numbers should be determined from risk assessment, with due regard to such matters as fire evacuation requirements, and wear and tear on the property. All relevant parties – curators, event managers etc. should be involved in the risk assessment process.

Letting events should be restricted to those identified as acceptable from your risk assessment. You should also create a procedures document to be followed by hirers when using the property. Hirers should sign up to these procedures prior to events taking place. Arrangements should be in place to ensure that there is proper coordination and cooperation between the property owner and hirers during letting events.

Catering

Where outside catering is to be used, a list of approved contract caterers should be compiled from which hirers can pick.

Approved contractors should be able to demonstrate compliance with health and safety legal requirements, have their own Public and Employers' Liability insurance covers in place with an adequate level of indemnity, provide satisfactory references in respect of past work in other heritage properties, and provide adequate site management of both their own personnel and any sub-contractors they are using.

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Contractors should actively participate in event risk assessments and supply method statements for the work they are undertaking. Contractors should undertake pre-event familiarisation visits of the property and receive appropriate training in any systems of work that need to be followed. Contractors should sign a contract for services, agreeing to abide by written terms and conditions of use of the property.

Access

Suitable vehicular access routes and delivery times for contractors should be identified from risk assessment, taking into account such factors as the risks of property damage, presence of pedestrians and any additional lighting requirements where events are being staged during the hours of darkness. Where possible parking should be confined to designated areas and sited clear of emergency exit/access routes. Details of contract vehicles entering the site should be recorded. Be sure to share information with contractors about any restricted access or other site conditions.

Access points to the building should be restricted, as far as possible, to limit the environmental impact. All non-essential doors should be secured against unauthorised use and all authorised access points supervised. Contractors should be issued with identification to help combat unauthorised access, and should sign in/out of the property to satisfy both security and fire safety evacuation requirements. Both contractors and the public should only be permitted to use those access routes through the building that have been identified as appropriate in the 'event' risk assessment. Access to non-authorised areas should be prohibited using security measures such as locks, bolts, bars and/or intruder alarms, together with direct supervision where possible.

The transport of equipment and furniture through the property should be carefully controlled to minimise the risks of damage to both the fabric of the building and its contents. Vulnerable items located within permitted access routes should either be removed or be appropriately protected against damage.

Supervision

Supervisory staff should be clear on their roles and responsibilities. At least one supervisor should be present in each room being used to host an event, and staff should have an adequate means of summoning assistance e.g. portable radios. Staff should receive training in the performance of their roles, including how to deal with the public, in particular where they may be faced with challenging behaviour, and procedures to be followed in respect of the clean up of spillages etc.

Welfare facilities

Suitable changing, toilet, rest room and canteen facilities for contractors should be provided, as identified in the 'event' risk assessment. A designated smoking area should be provided outside the building, with ashtrays and a separate metal bin for cigarette waste disposal. To prevent damage to valuable fabrics and furnishings, welfare areas should be clearly defined.

Pre and post event activities

Sufficient time should be allowed within contractor's method statements for the set up and dismantling of furniture and equipment. Inadequate provision could result in short cuts being taken and accidents occurring. Furniture and equipment should only be set up in areas identified as suitable in the 'event' risk assessment and contractors should be prohibited from moving any items or attaching things to the fabric of the building without authorisation.

Marquees

Marquees should not be erected without first obtaining any necessary permission, such as local authority consent. Marquees should be erected and dismantled in a safe manner and not fixed to the fabric of the property. Care should be taken to ensure historic grounds are protected against damage during the course of the use of marquees. If the marquee is secured by spikes, make sure you are aware of the location of electrical cables to avoid damage. Culverts can also be damaged by any weights used to secure marquees.

Electrical safety

All portable electrical equipment brought on site should have been subject to regular portable appliance safety testing. Documented evidence in this respect should be examined prior to items arriving on site. Proprietary cable protectors should be used where there are trailing cables to minimise tripping hazards, and the risk of physical damage to the cable and its insulation, which could increase the risk of an electrical fire occurring. Event power requirements should be ascertained from the risk assessment and managed to ensure the fixed electrical system is not overloaded.

Any additional lighting being used should be positioned away from combustible or otherwise vulnerable surfaces and sited in a secure and stable position.

Portable heaters

Where additional heating is identified as necessary, the number and type of heaters to be used should be agreed in advance, with the aim of minimising both their environmental impact and any increased risk of fire.

The use of portable heaters should be restricted as far as possible and they should be placed well away from any items of a combustible nature.

Waste

Waste generated from events should be swept up and bagged at the end of each event, and cleared from the site as soon as possible. Accumulation of waste can increase the risk of fire.

Event rooms

As with vulnerable items located within access routes, vulnerable items located in event rooms should be identified from the 'event' risk assessment and protected against damage. Protection measures may range from polite notices, to the issue of heel protectors where floors are susceptible to damage. Food and drink should only be prepared and eaten in agreed areas. Menus should be selected with due consideration of potential damage to the surrounding environment e.g. avoid serving greasy or highly coloured foods. Steam producing equipment, such as kettles, should not be used where there is a risk of damage to the fabric of the property or its contents.



Flower arrangements

Flower arrangements should not be placed against vulnerable surfaces and where they are to be sited on such surfaces, should be placed in a stable and secure position on a protective covering and arranged in oasis to minimise the risk of water damage. Where possible, flower arrangements should not be watered whilst on display in event rooms. Certain types of flowers can be more problematic e.g. geranium and peony petals stain stone, and you should therefore consider prohibiting the use of certain plants and flowers within the property.

Fire safety

The use of candles at events must be carefully assessed and controlled, taking into consideration both the increased risk of fire and possible damage to the property caused by smoke and wax deposits. To reduce these risks, where candles are to be used they should be placed within glass containers.

Cigarette smoking at events must be prohibited within the building and confined to a designated area outside. Ashtrays must be provided for cigarette waste disposal which should be emptied into a separate metal bin with a metal lid at the end of each event/evening and disposed of safely.

Suitable fire exits should be identified from a specific fire risk assessment for each type of event, along with an indication of the type and number of additional portable fire extinguishers required. Fire exits must be kept clear of obstruction at all times, portable fire extinguishers annually maintained and staff trained in fire safety, including the use of fire extinguishers and fire evacuation procedures.

Weddings

Many people choose to hold their wedding reception, or even the ceremony itself, in the surroundings of an historic property. Wedding packages may also include overnight accommodation. If you offer such services, you will need to undertake risk assessments and make arrangements accordingly.

Car parking arrangements should be included, along with the segregation of traffic and people. You should also consider alternative arrangements in the event of wet weather. Particular attention must be paid to the surfaces of car parks and the roads or paths serving them. Inadequate lighting/uneven/damaged/potholed surfaces are the main causes of trips and slips in heritage properties.

The risk of injury increases in line with alcohol consumption. This, combined with unfamiliarity with the premises can lead to accidents. Risk assessments should include the effects of alcohol consumption.

If accommodation is provided, you should make sure that information on the location of emergency exits is available. You should consider providing torches or other sources of light to enable your guests to move around the building at night. Your Fire Risk Assessment must be reviewed to take into account the sleeping risk.

Short term lets

Short-term lets, such as Airbnb are a great way to experience life in an historic building. Should you choose to provide accommodation in this way, you should check the website conditions to ensure that the provider offers some form of insurance or host guarantee, to cover damage that might be caused by guests. In addition, you should advise Ecclesiastical, since there may be some restrictions in cover.

Need to contact us?

For further advice Ecclesiastical customers can call our Risk Management Department on **01 619 0300** (Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm, excluding bank holidays)

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